

February 1988

Letters to the Editor

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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Recommended Citation

Catholic Physicians' Guild (1988) "Letters to the Editor," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 55: No. 1, Article 1.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lmq/vol55/iss1/1>

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Article Clarification

To the Editor:

For purposes of clarification, Mr. Scott Helsper and I, authors of the article, "Foregoing Artificial Nutrition and Hydration: Some Recent Legal and Moral Implications for Catholic Health Care Facilities," (*Linacre Quarterly*, August, 1987: 39-47), are making the following observations for readers:

References in the article to ethical positions which appear to endorse some morally controversial recommendations concerning the withdrawal of artificial nutrition and hydration reflect an earlier draft and were eliminated in the final text approved for publication. Specifically, these corrections concerned the elimination of a reference to Fr. O'Rourke's position on artificial nutrition and hydration for the irreversibly comatose, and an amended paragraph to correct a possible misinterpretation of the statement of the U.S. Bishops' Pro-Life Committee. Unfortunately, in the publication process these corrections were inadvertently omitted for the August, 1987 issue.

Therefore, lest there be any misunderstanding on the part of readers about our article, we do not endorse the withdrawal of artificial nutrition and hydration to any class of patients on the basis of a spurious "quality of life" judgment. Our revised manuscript scrupulously avoids any such interpretation, and we do not wish to be associated with any movement to extend euthanasia to those judged to be less deserving of care and protection.

We thank the readers for their indulgence, and we also thank the editors for their gracious, professional courtesy and consideration.

Scott T. Helsper, Attorney at Law
Reverend Jeremiah J. McCarthy, Ph.D.

A Reader's Appreciation

I should like to tell you how very useful *Linacre* has been to me over the years - I teach Ethics in Hong Kong's Holy Spirit Seminary, and I also teach Medical Ethics to nurses in a Teaching Hospital. Not all magazines — even Catholic ones which deal with these topics — are as reliable as *Linacre*.

Finally, I want to thank you for all that you have been doing over the years in that grueling task of editor — a task that has not been made easier by some of the trends in the Church in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Wishing you every blessing on your work.

Peter Brady, S.J.
Hong Kong

On the Mole Argument

To the Editor:

The "mole argument" is a curious "myth".

Every cytogenetic student should know that hydatiform mole does not occur after "fecundation". Fecundation takes place when the male set of chromosomes (carried by the sperm) unite to the female set (carried by the ovum). That's what makes the zygote and thus the embryo.

Now in a mole, there are only *two* sets of chromosomes of *male* origin and no chromosomes of *maternal* origin. Mole is, so to speak, the male equivalent of the dermoid cyst of the girl.

Hence in a mole the true fecundation does not occur . . . no wonder that an embryo can never develop from a non-zygote!

Maybe Prof. R. V. Short, quoted by our colleague H. Caton (Ed. note: "The Ethics

of Human Embryo Experimentation", *Linacre Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 4, November, 1987), is a little short about genetics. I suspect the genetic constitution of mole is the same in Australia as elsewhere.

With my very best regards.

Jerome Lejeune
Chaire de Genetique Fondamentale
Université René Descartes
Paris

Pontiff's Words

"It is sometimes claimed that dissent from the Magisterium is totally compatible with being a 'good Catholic' and poses no obstacle to the reception of the sacraments. This is a grave error that challenges the teaching office of the bishops of the United States and elsewhere."

These were the Pope's answer to Archbishop John Quinn's observation about troublesome moral issues including birth control, abortion and homosexuality, during our Holy Father's visit to the States in September. These words were addressed specifically to the Church in the States.

But have we not also been inclined to think that it is possible to disagree with the

Church's teachings and still be a good Catholic, or have we actually taken to practice what we want to practice and make up our own mind on moral issues such as birth control, manipulation of procreation and abortion to suit our conveniences and soothe our conscience, and ignore the Church's teaching which we disagree with?

It is all right to ask why, to find out the reasons why certain decisions are made by the Church, but eventually we must accept that the Holy Spirit is working through the Church and is guiding us in times of turmoil along the right path. The pick and choose attitude is therefore inappropriate.

G. K. Chesterton once said, "We don't need a church that is right when we are right, we need a church that is right when we are wrong." That is why the Holy Father's words to the American church are also relevant to us, members of the universal church, and members of the profession often involved in the centre of biomedical moral issues.

Yours in Christ,

George Chan
Hong Kong

(The above was reprinted from the Newsletter of the Guild of St. Luke, Sts. Cosmas and Damien in Hong Kong.)